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# FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 31, 2000

### **CHAIRMAN SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH RESOURCE AGENCIES TO IMPROVE HYDROPOWER LICENSING**

James J. Hoecker, Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, today announced that he and the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce had signed an agreement to improve and accelerate hydropower licensing.

The Joint Statement of Commitment follows the efforts of an Interagency Task Force that was created in late 1998. By encouraging collaborative efforts and settlements, improving communication among all participants in the licensing process, and coordinating and streamlining processes at the various agencies, the agreement will make the hydropower licensing process more timely and less costly.

Chairman Hoecker said: "The Commission has long focused on achieving more efficient administration of our hydropower licensing program. Today, we announce a landmark agreement that serves that goal." Chairman Hoecker highlighted commitments made by the resource agencies to seek public input on mandatory conditions, and to participate in the alternative licensing process. "I view the commitments of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Commerce to provide an opportunity for public review and comment on draft mandatory conditions as significant developments. Timely input from the public will give these agencies a more complete record on the effectiveness and costs of possible conditions. That record, in turn, will enable more fully informed decisions by the resource agencies on how to craft environmental conditions in our cases."

On resource agency participation in the collaborative process, Chairman Hoecker said: "It is also important that the resource agencies have endorsed the Commission's

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Alternative Licensing Process and have committed to participating constructively in that process. I continue to believe that consensus-based solutions can best serve the public interest, and timely participation by the resource agencies is key to reaching such settlements."

"Collectively, the commitments reflected in this agreement will improve the implementation of the sometimes cumbersome Federal Power Act licensing process," Chairman Hoecker concluded. "However, the Commission and the resource agencies must continue to work together to ensure that hydropower licensing decisions fairly and sensibly recognize and accommodate both developmental and environmental values."

The Joint Statement of Commitment is available on the Commission's website at [www.ferc.fed.us](http://www.ferc.fed.us) under "What's New."